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COUNTRY Poland

REPORT

SUBJECT Political Education in the Polish
Armed Forces after October 1956

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a report containing information on
political education in the Polish Armed Forces after October 1956.

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Enclosure A

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COUNTRY: Poland

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SUBJECT: Political Education in the Polish Armed Forces after October 1956

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Changes in Political Education after October 1956

1. Even though the October 1956 events resulted in only minor changes in the organizational structure of political education in the Polish Armed Forces, they nevertheless brought about profound shifts in the methods used in the political indoctrination of officers and men. [redacted] the post-October shifts in the Politburo and Rokossovski's departure for Moscow resulted in a re-allocation of responsibilities among the members of the Central Committee of the Polish United Worker's Party (PZPR). Up to the time he was named first secretary of the PZPR during March 1956, Edward Ochab was responsible for the political education in the armed forces. General Witaszewski directed the Main Political Administration of the Polish Army.

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[redacted]
Witaszewski was replaced by Brigadier General Zarszycki.

2. Among the other organizational changes effected after October 1956 was the elimination of Political Education Officers-PEO (actually called Deputy Commanders for Political Affairs) on the battalion level in the army, and the granting to Communist Party members of greater freedom in the election of secretaries in the regimental and lower Basic Party Organizations (Podstawowa Organizacja Partyjna-POP). Even though, technically, the soldier communists had this privilege prior to October 1956, in practice, they were

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required to "elect" the candidates named by the higher party authorities.

[redacted] one of the important results of this last change would be a gradual decrease in Gomulka's influence among the party rank and file in the armed forces. As long as the selection of the POP secretaries was imposed upon the regimental and lower military PZPR organizations from above, the loyalty of this official to the party first secretary was assured. After this change was effected, there was a tendency to select secretaries who were popular with the soldiers and officers, and who did not always look out for the best interests of the PZPR.

3. The chaotic conditions prevailing in the education of PZPR civilian rank and file, following the October Plenum, was duplicated in the Polish armed forces. Politburo shifts produced a temporary disruption in the flow of directives from the Central Committee to the GZP-WP at this crucial period. This in turn completely disoriented all political education officers down to and including those at the company level. Unlike the merchant marine, where all the political education officer posts were abolished immediately, the armed forces continued to carry them on their tables of organization, except for the battalion level PEO positions, which were dropped. To justify their continued existence the remaining PEOs attempted to carry on their activities despite the fact that in the past they had been discouraged by the PZPR and thus had little experience in exercising any initiative. Faced with difficulties and the absence of accustomed guidance, some reduced their training activities to a minimum, merely asking the soldiers and officers to read and report on articles appearing in the party publication, Trybuna Ludu. Others continued their regular educational sessions, but because of the lack of thematic material no longer supplied from above, they introduced discussions about Poland's geography, history or even practical army subjects. There were also some who cancelled their training sessions entirely or permitted them to degenerate into bull sessions during which the participants boasted of their amorous exploits.
4. [redacted] it would be almost impossible to generalize about the conduct of political education in the armed forces during this October-May period because the courses taken in each unit depended almost entirely upon the inclination, personality, and Communist ardour of the particular PEO and party secretary. Equally important were the attitudes of the individual soldier or officer required to participate in the meetings. The gradual relaxation of controls among the civilians, and the Gomulka-encouraged neglect of collectivization after October had a pronounced effect upon the mass of soldiers. They had already witnessed the disintegration of the Communist Association of Polish Youth (Związek Młodzieży Polskiej-ZMP) units in the armed forces during March 1956. Most of the former ZMP members were so completely disillusioned that they tended to turn away from all Communist activity and participated in political education sessions only to the extent required to obtain a favorable opinion in their personnel dossiers from the PEO.
5. The somewhat elder officer and soldier members of the Polish United Workers Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza-PZPR) quickly assumed the same critical attitude toward their party as that which had spread through the ranks of their civilian counterparts. During this October-May period, the army and the air force party members demonstrated their independence by removing party sealots from positions of secretary in the lowest POP units. These changes were gradually reflected at higher levels as the representatives of the lower units participated in the selection of officials of the company, and regimental POPs. [redacted] this influence would even reach the Divisional and Area Party Commissions.

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6. During the October-May period, [] in addition to the greater independence demonstrated by the PZPR officers and enlisted personnel, there was considerably more criticism of the party itself. Among army-air force personnel [] more liberal expressions of opinion. Many resented the earlier Soviet interference in Polish military matters, and voiced opposition to following the Soviet example blindly in patterns of training, instruction, discipline and even uniforms. The more nationalistic resented the fact that they were not allowed to exhibit enthusiasm for Polish army traditions.

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7. As a result of the extensive discussions held during training sessions, a more critical attitude developed also toward Socialism; some persons attempted to define the term while others delved into an interpretation of "different roads to Socialism". They soon gained the conviction that, despite different roads, "the goal for Poland remains the same." The more intelligent soldiers and officers could not reconcile the Political Education Officers' definitions of Socialism with the continued low standards of living which they knew from personal experience existed in the USSR after forty years of Socialist rule.

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[] the average Polish youth was anxious to assume some initiative in the shaping of his country's future. After October 1956, this feeling became so pronounced among many soldiers that the former ZMP workers, who had retained their paid youth instruction positions in the army, following the dissolution of the ZMP, were reluctant to undertake any educational activities for fear of being laughed off the rostrum. The PEOs, even though they had more authority and influence, nevertheless marked time and waited for more specific guidance from the GZP-MP in Warsaw.

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Organization of Political Education in Polish Army as of May 1957

10. The chart on page 7 gives a general outline of the organizational structure of the political education arrangement in the Polish army []

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[] It shows the following:

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a. Platoon Level: Starting at the bottom, the lowest Communist Party units in the Polish army is the Platoon Party Group (Plutenowa Grupa Partyjna-PGP) which is composed of PZPR members from the Squads. The political education activities at this level are conducted by one of the squad party members on a voluntary basis under the supervision of the Company Political Education Officer. During these Platoon Party Group meetings, the members hold discussions on subjects designated by the Company PEO, or work on projects intended to improve their political orientation, and military education, or to raise the standing of their unit in interplatoon competition. It is also each Communist Party member's responsibility to check whether all of the provisions of the party charter are observed during all activities in the armed forces.

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The actual meetings are held in accordance with the wishes of the PEO or the secretary of the group. If the platoons of a given company join in a common project, they hold joint meetings which are conducted usually by the secretary of the Executive Committee of the Company Party Nucleus (Osrodek Organizacji Partyjnej-OOP). Even though the secretary of each party unit in theory outranks the PEO, in practice, he always takes orders from the Political Education Officer.

- b. Company Level: The Company Political Education Officer is the lowest ranking official of the Polish Army who devotes full time to Communist party education. [redacted] this post filled with ranks ranging from Warrant Officer to First Lieutenant, despite the fact that the Army Table of Organization calls for a First Lieutenant in this position. He is always given the title "Deputy to the Commander for Political Affairs" irrespective of the level on which he serves. Even though the PEO is a "deputy" he cannot be punished by his immediate superior, being responsible for his activities only to the next higher Political Education Officer.

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- c. The company PEO utilizes the services of two agitators whom he selects from among the soldiers in the platoons. He can also call for support from the Executive Committee of the OOP or on the successors to the former ZMP which, in some military units, were organized under the new name of Association of Socialist Youth. The Company PEO supervises political training of his platoons and holds regular examinations to determine the effectiveness of the indoctrination. The PEO also assumes certain responsibilities for the discipline, morale and welfare of his charges. The [redacted] PEO [redacted] spent considerable time in numerous welfare trips which were required to solve problems of soldiers' families in various sections of Poland. The problems usually involved loss of apartments or dispossession from land belonging to the family. In such cases, the PEO, armed with his superior's authorization, could prevail upon local PZPR authorities much more effectively than the conscripted soldier himself. In addition, the PEOs held regular military inspection of their units during the spring and fall, and conducted sporadic checks among the soldiers to detect the presence of subversive or undesirable reading matter among their possessions.

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- d. Battalion Level: Following the political changes effected in October 1956, the post of Battalion Political Education Officer was abolished.
- e. Regimental Level: The Regimental Political Education Officer was also known by the title "Deputy to the Commander for Political Affairs". He had a full time secretary assigned to his office for the handling of all POP affairs. In addition, his staff included one Propaganda Instructor, one Director of Club Libraries, and one Youth Instructor. Since all twelve company and platoon level PEOs in the regiment were subject to his orders and direction, they were, in effect, his assistants whenever he so desired. Working closely with the regimental PEO is the secretary of the regimental Basic Party Organization. Even though usually a trained party activist who theoretically received directions from the Central Committee, in practice the secretary always takes orders from the Political Education Officer.

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[redacted] it was easy to reach an understanding with the party secretary who was willing to allow the especially trained PEO to handle all of the planning and directing, while the secretary would assign to the party activists the

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Attachment A

more menial tasks. During the May-October period, discouragement was so prevalent that even the zealots among the party secretaries and PEOs on the regimental levels neglected their programs. As a result, the number of training sessions was considerably reduced, and the effectiveness of those which were conducted declined considerably.

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the most effective control of PZPR political education activity stems from these regimental offices, and consequently the breakdown of morale at this point is reflected in disorganization and laxity in party work all along the line.

- f. Division Level: On the army division level, there is a Political Department composed of two sections, one dealing with the political indoctrination of the divisional headquarters personnel, and the other with the supervision of activities of the PEOs in subordinate units. The usual staff of nine (both sections) consists of the Deputy to the Commander for Political Affairs (PEO), his deputy, the Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of the Party Control Commission, two Propaganda Instructors, one Director of Party Records, one Youth Instructor and one Welfare Officer. The 10 to 15 subordinate members of the Party Control Commission are not members of the divisional PEO's staff, but their cooperation as needed is insured by the fact that their superiors, the Secretary and his assistant, are actually members of the PEO's office.
- g. Army Area Level: Each of the three Army Areas has its own Area Political Administration (Zarnad Polityensky Okregu-ZPO) which controls all political education activity in the corresponding Army Area (Central Area I - Warsaw, Pomeranian Area II - Bydgoszcz, and Silesian Area III - Wroclaw). The organization of the Army Area Political Administrations follows the same organizational set-up as that of the division, except that considerably more personnel are assigned to propaganda, party records and youth affairs. The Area Party Commission also has a special Department of Cadres composed of a chief, an assistant, and five trusted employees who handle all of the reports of the PEOs and maintain their personnel dossiers. The Area Party Commission has a Secret Office and a Propaganda Supply Department.

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- h. Main Political Administration: At the top of the political education structure is the Main Political Administration of the Polish Army (Główny Zarząd Polityensky Wojska Polskiego-GZPWP) situated in Warsaw. Closely associated with it is the Party Commission of the Polish Army (Komisja Partyjna Wojska Polskiego-KPWP).

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most of the departments of the Area Political Administration offices had their counterparts in these higher offices.

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the Party Commission of the Polish Army consisted of about fifteen members, and its chairman was elected each year from among the GZPWP members. the organizational, party-records, propaganda and educational sections of the PZPR Central Committee supplied personnel to the Main Political Administration offices in Warsaw.

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Attachment A

Air Force, Navy and Defense Institution Political Administrations

- i. There is only one Political Administration for the Air Forces Command (Zarząd Polityczny Dowództwa Wojsk Lotniczych-ZPDWL), situated in Warsaw, and a similar organization called the Political Administration for the Navy Command (Zarząd Polityczny Dowództwa Marynarki Wojennej-ZPDMW), located in Gdynia. In addition, there is a special Political Administration for Ministry of National Defense Institutions (Zarząd Polityczny Centralnych Instytucji Ministerstwa Obrony Narodowej-ZPCIMON), also centered in Warsaw but with branches in various independent institutions situated in various sections of Poland; this Defense Administration does not bear a known relationship to the regular Army, Air Force, and Navy Political Administrations. An Area Party Commission representing the Central Committee of the PZPR was attached to the Area Political Administration for each of the three army areas, and to the Political Administrations for Air Force, Navy and Defense Institutions.

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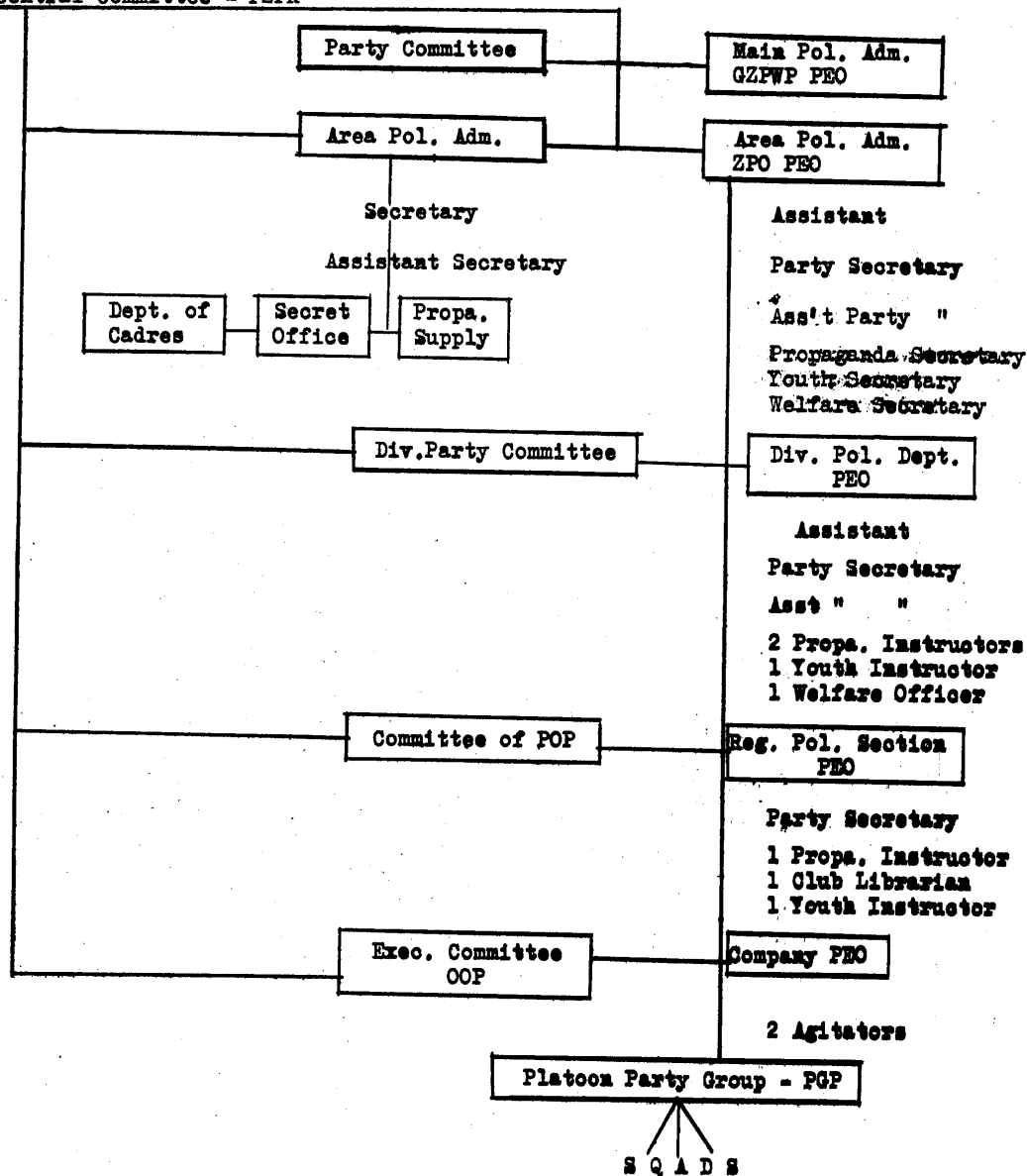
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ORGANIZATION OF PEO AND PZPR UNITS IN POLISH DEFENSE FORCES

Central Committee - PZPR



Same general organizational pattern is followed in the Air Forces and Navy, but there is a special Political Administration for Ministry of National Defense Institutions.

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